

01-096/RCE

## IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the first full paragraph on page 7 as follows:

To reduce the porosity of the titanium nitride layer 44, the present invention provides for annealing the titanium nitride layer 44 using an isotropic plasma 46 of hydrogen and nitrogen ions (step 112), as depicted in Fig. 1G. It is thought that as the titanium nitride layer 44 is exposed to the plasma 46, hydrocarbons in the layer 44 react with the hydrogen and nitrogen ions to form volatile compounds, such as C-H and CN, which escape from the layer 44. This release of the trapped hydrocarbons preferably densifies the titanium nitride structure, which densification preferably reduces the thickness of the layer 44 by about 50%. In the preferred embodiment, the structure 10 is heated to about 450 centigrade as it is exposed to the plasma 46, thereby enhancing the reaction of hydrogen with carbon and the growth of the grain structure of the titanium nitride layer 44.